ED Fires in the Mirror Modified Worksheet

Based on your viewing of the entire youtube version of Fires in the Mirror which was created from the play for presentation on television, answer the following questions:

1. Describe the stasis in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.

This video version of *Fires in the Mirror* relates the perspectives of people living in Crown Heights, Brooklyn during August, 1991. It deals with the anti-Semitic viewpoints of residents after a Jewish rabbi’s car ran over a young black boy and the stabbing of a Jewish student in retaliation.

2. What is the intrusion?

Specifically, I believe the intrusion would occur when the rabbi runs over Gavin because this is the incident that propels the action forward to the end of the play. More broadly perhaps, the intrusion could be the African American community’s belief that the Jews get special treatment because this is largely what sparks the rioting and protests.

3. What is the unique factor?

“Today is the day…” this rabbi (accidentally or because of reckless driving) hit Gavin, an incident which caused the murder of a Jewish student.

4. What is the dramatic question that should be answered by the end of the play?

Will both the Jewish community and the African American community feel that justice has been served in this tragedy and following trial?

5. In your opinion what is the most theatrical segment of the video version of the play and explain why do you think it is so powerful?

So many sections of this play stood out as being powerful and poignant. I found the section titled “My Brother’s Blood” to be the most well executed and most moving. Anna Smith made great use of an accent in this section, and her sweeping hand gestures combined with the echo from the microphones made it seem like she was really addressing a huge gathering of upset Jewish people. A close second for the most theatrical part would be “Isaac” - it was so powerfully quite and heart-wrenching. The opposition between the kind, elderly woman and the horrors she was talking about made for a very memorable scene.

6. List some of the themes of the play.

* peoples’ lack of awareness for religious practices and their significance (Jews not being able to cook in regular ovens or eat certain foods)
* the amount to which people “in the wrong” should offer condolences to those they have harmed
* Jewish fears of discrimination and the lasting effects of the Holocaust on Jewish communities
* African Americans feeling under represented and undervalued in the legal and business world

7. Television allows the actress to create mini sets, a variety of lighting effects, and detailed costume pieces for the presentation of her many characters, not to mention graphic footage of the actual events in Crown Heights. This is frankly not possible to accomplish on the stage which requires that the action move rapidly between one scene and the other leaving little if any time for a change of dress, settings, lights, and props. Describe some of the varieties of these production details that struck you as particularly effective.

I found the costumes to be particularly helpful when trying to remember who was speaking and what they were speaking about. I could always tell if the character was a Jew or non-Jew, even if I did not catch their name and occupation at the beginning of their narrative because their head coverings and dress reflected which group they belonged with. Anna Smith’s hair and makeup was also phenomenal for each of the people she portrayed! With her costumes, movements, and physical appearance, she completely transformed herself into any of her characters. I found the music that played over the pictures to be very well placed as well. It included African American jazz and Yiddish chants at various points, highlighting the differences between these two groups of people. The sets, though limited, added visual interest to the scene and placed the characters in a relevant venue in which to tell their story. Since it was filmed for TV, Anna Smith could carefully construct and execute her vision for this play with the help of filming techniques, set designers, and an amazing wardrobe crew!